Annual Meeting Abstracts

The 2009 WAAC Annual Meeting was held August 19 - 21 in Juneau, Alaska. The papers from the meeting are listed below along with summaries prepared by the speakers.

Repair and Restoration of Two Sculptures by Benny Bufano

Jonathan S. Fisher

The pieces were restored for the California Academy of Science in 2008. One was a large marble owl (3'x5'x4') that had a broken and missing ear. We sculpted, then caste. then attached the new ear to the body. The other was a sculpture of a small bear of cast concrete (24"x4"x6") that was broken in half. We joined the two parts and then matched the surface. contour. color, and texture. Also I would like to include an overview of the artist's life and work so that he can be further appreciated.

Undocumented Worker

Karen Zukor

Conservation performed under the radar; how to practice ethically and excellently when the client, location, and object must remain a secret. Three paper conservation projects that stretched the boundaries of normal documentation, and required imagination and a sense of the ridiculous.

Things Shouldn't Go Bump in the Night!: Paranormal Research and Investigations in Museums and Historic Sites

David Harvey

Paranormal investigations or "ghost hunting" has become a prolific activity in recent years with the popularity of various reality-based television shows such as *Ghost Hunters* and *Ghost Adventurers* and more. Many local and regional paranormal groups inundate museums and historic sites with requests to conduct all-night investigations with their teams and equipment. While many institutions find the marketing opportunities of having resident ghosts irresistible, many are also understandably distrustful of having these groups roaming their buildings and collections in the dark.

This paper explores the challenges presented and a pilot program with specific guidelines for both museums and paranormal groups to follow so that preservation is enhanced and both groups can benefit from each other. Several case studies will be presented that illustrate the issues, challenges, and decisions that were made. Because of the unique situations encountered there has to be an approach that raises mutual awareness and respect by everyone involved.

A Comparison of Two Soot Removal Techniques: "Dry Ice Dusting" and Rubber-based Chemical Sponges

Seth Irwin and Randy Silverman

Faced with numerous soot-stained ledger books from a 2006 fire at a county recorders office in Utah, Preservation Librarian Randy Silverman employed the technique of dry ice dusting to remove soot residue from the surface of the books. Visual observation after treatment suggested the technique was more effective that conventional surface wiping with rubber – based sponges, but quantifiable analysis was impossible to consider at the time.

This paper compares the techniques of dry ice dusting and rubber sponge cleaning in removing soot residue from the surface of smoke-damaged books. The study defines an experimental approach for standardizing soot deposition on various types of bookbinding material (leather, fine and coarse cloth, paper). The research compares the efficacy of the two cleaning methods by investigating the amount of residual soot remaining on the cleaned surfaces with colourimetry and uses a laser scan profilometer to measure surface abrasion to identify risks associated with each method.

PEG Treatments at the Alaska State Museum

Ellen Carrlee

Brief introduction to the past 30 years of conservation literature about polyethylene glycol for waterlogged wood and basketry. Review of PEG treatments used at the Alaska State Museum since 1990 with a focus on archaeological basketry. Discussion of the challenges in treating basketry material and possible solutions currently under investigation in Alaska.

Conservation of Waterlogged Wood from the *USS Monitor*

Susanne Grieve and Elsa Sangouard

The Mariners' Museum, located in Newport News, Virginia, is the official repository for artifacts excavated from the *USS Monitor*. Recovered by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the United States Navy, several of the larger components of the Civil War ironclad, such as the rotating gun turret, steam engine, gun carriages and cannons, are currently undergoing treatment. Smaller artifacts recovered from the wreck site number in the thousands and include personal items such as tools and clothing. Many personal items and pieces of ship's equipment are composite artifacts of wood and metal. Waterlogged wood treatment case studies from the *USS Monitor* and an examination of current research being conducted on wooden samples from the wreck site will be discussed.

The Ice Patch Archaeological Collection: Conserving 9000 years of Yukon Hunting History

Valery Monahan

In 1997, hunters on a mountain near Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada made an important discovery in a patch of alpine snow: caribou dung more than 2000 years old and a fragment of a wooden throwing board dart (or atlatl) over 4000 years old.

Since then, a hundred ancient ice patches have been found. Local conditions preserved ice for up to 9300 years: a frozen record of life in this remote, mountainous region. Unusually hot summers in the 1990's exposed and melted the ancient ice, releasing its contents. Most ice patches have yielded faunal remains, but twenty three contained beautifully preserved archaeological artifacts: composite arrows and throwing board darts, some virtually complete. Materials preserved include wood, antler, hide, sinew, feathers, ochre paint, and spruce resin hafting adhesive. The collection includes the most complete, early examples of large game hunting projectiles in the New World. Ice patch artifacts document

9000 years of hunting in the southern Yukon, from just after the last ice age until the arrival of Euro-Canadians in the 19th century.

This talk will describe conservation work on archaeological artifacts from Yukon ice patches. Exposed when ancient ice melts, these organic artifacts deteriorate rapidly. Each summer, a crew uses a helicopter to monitor ice patch melt and to salvage artifacts and specimens. Artifacts are dried slowly in commercial style freezers, a "low-tech" approach which minimizes conflict between stabilization and future analysis. Though small in numbers, the finds are a rich source for research. Custom designed mounts and boxes are made for each artifact, to help protect this unique heritage resource for the future.

Backward Glances: Radical or Conservative?

Dennis K. Calabi

Since the theme of the conference is "Extreme Conservation" and the theme of the recent AIC conference was "Conservation 2.0," I couldn't help but ponder the subject in terms of the latest trends versus older materials and techniques. Which is conservative, which is extreme? As an older conservator/restorer of paintings trained 40 years ago in an old fashioned apprenticeship, rapid adoption of experimental new materials and techniques seems to me a bit extreme, yet it seems that the new dominant paradigm is to abandon the old as soon as a promising new material appears. If it proves to be a disaster in a few years, the crowd moves on to the next great thing, continuing to ignore older solutions.

While many old ways really were awful and should be abandoned, many others were simply flawed. The beauty of the old ways is that they are known and tested, their flaws as well documented as their virtues, so we can predict the results. I will discuss specific materials I feel have been foolishly discarded as well as others too widely embraced. I also wish to discuss what seems to me to be an excessive reliance on science, much of it poorly understood or incorrectly applied. Good science is obviously essential, but it seems that hand skills and intuition have been taking a back seat. I'm not advocating a reactionary return to the past, just a more measured and balanced approach. We need more tools in our arsenal, not fewer. I would also like to see more independent thinking, less lockstep marching forward like lemmings.

On Again, Off Again: Conservation Aspects in Accessible Display Case Design

Michele Austin Dennehy

The National Museum of Natural History (NMNH) and the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) are in the final stretch of a three year collaboration with the Anchorage Museum at Rasmuson Center to create an Alaska Native cultural exhibition. The project, developed in conjunction with the Smithsonian's Arctic Studies Center is intended to provide an unprecedented level of access and interaction between Smithsonian collections and indigenous source communities. The gallery, located in the new wing of the Anchorage Museum, will include both exhibition and research spaces. Floor-to-ceiling glass cases will display almost 600 Alaska Native heritage objects from the Smithsonian collections, and at the same time be available for hands-on examination and discussion by Alaska Native elders, artists, and scholars.

Smithsonian conservators have been working to ensure the long-term preservation of these objects, while simultaneously facilitating an unprecedented level of access. Meeting conservation criteria to allow objects to be safely removed from exhibit for study has been an ongoing process, which has included working closely with exhibition designers, curators, fabricators, and mountmakers. Conservators have been working to address many conservation concerns including: 1) the design and development of display cases utilizing a tensioned rod system to support fragile objects in an active seismic environment 2) the design of object mounts that properly support objects inside the display case; allowing the objects to be visually accessible for study and serve as a means of conveyance to bring objects from exhibit cases to the study center.

This talk will summarize the conservation challenges of working with a unique exhibition case design in which objects will be routinely removed from exhibition for study and museum programs.

Treating Ipiutak Wooden Objects Remotely – A Work in Progress

Monica Shah

In the summer of 2008, officials for Ukpeagvik Inupiat Corporation (UIC), the village corporation of the Inupiat from Barrow, contacted the Anchorage Museum to help preserve some unique objects unearthed during excavations at a local site. They needed immediate assistance and long range planning for the treatment of a large amount of wooden artifacts. The objects ranged from 1.5 m-long sled runners carved from a single piece of wood to a small spoon or paddle. In an area where there are no trees and wood is harvested on the beach, these wooden artifacts were especially important. Because of the fragility, size, age, and rarity of the objects, shipping them to a conservation lab, out of the community, was not an option. Instead, a plan was developed to treat them at a research facility in Barrow, monitor them from a distance, and give guidance to archaeologists who live in Barrow year-round. I will present our treatment plan, why it was chosen, and our assessment of the various treatments so far.

Photograph Conservation Internship in Alaska

Jennifer McGlinchey

This talk will summarize a 10 week summer internship at the Alaska State Library in Juneau. The internship included a survey of the Library's Historical Collections (comprised of nearly half a million photographic prints and negatives), collections management, and workshops conducted throughout the state through Alaska's Archives Rescue Corps. The experiences of another 2nd year Buffalo State Conservation student, Jennifer Dennis, during her internship at

the Baranov Museum in Kodiak, Alaska, will also be shared.

The Conservation of the Frances Davis Paintings from the Holy Trinity Church, Juneau Alaska

Carmen Bria

This paper will be a brief overview of the conservation treatment of 6 altar paintings by Frances Davis. These paintings were removed from Holy Trinity Church in Juneau in 2005 and sent to the WCCFA in Denver for treatment. In March of 2006, as the paintings were about to be returned to Juneau for re-installation, the church was consumed by fire. Holy Trinity Church was the second oldest church in Juneau having been built in 1896. Davis and her husband were among the founders of the church. It has since been rebuilt and the paintings will soon be reinstalled. One of the paintings, *The Day of Judgement,* is presently on view at the Douglas-Juneau City Museum.

Simple Solutions to Complex Problems: The 2008/09 Ice Mitigation and Artefact Conservation Program at Scott's Terra Nova Hut Cape Evans, Antarctica

Lizzie Meek and Susanne Grieves

As part of the Ross Sea Heritage Restoration Project managed by the Antarctic Heritage Trust (AHT) the Trust is currently undertaking conservation work at Captain Scott's iconic last expedition base at Cape Evans. During summer 2008/9, year 2 of the 6 year project, AHT undertook a major ice and snow mitigation work program. Until this season Scott's Terra Nova Hut had been at imminent risk of loss due to unprecedented snowfall and ice buildup.

To overcome this threat, work has involved making the building structurally secure and weather-proof. Snow and ice were removed from around the hut using vehicles, humans, and the awesome power of nature. Temporary wind deflectors were installed to minimize future snow and ice build-up. The removal of ice from under the hut floor was a major undertaking.

A combined international team of 3 conservators and 4 conservation carpenters lived onsite throughout the season. Due to an unexpectedly shortened schedule the team was required to work 12 hour shifts, 7 days a week in order to complete the work program. The custom-built conservation laboratory and carpentry workshop located onsite this season allowed for a greater range and number of conservation treatments and carpentry repairs to be carried out.

The ice and snow removal revealed a number of artifacts which were exposed for the first time in decades. These artifacts were surveyed and added to the 8000+ artifact conservation treatment program which continues with 4 winter conservators employed working through winter in modern laboratory located at Scott Base.

Sand or Snow? - Preparation of an Archival Model by Renowned Modernist Architect John Lautner for a Traveling Exhibition

Albrecht Gumlich

The importance of 3D architectural models can be witnesses in many museum entrances where visitors are provided with a comprehensive overview of the complex building they are about to enter. For the same reason of simple interpretation architects continue to use actual maquettes to convince a client of their extraordinary projects.

At the Getty Research Institute (GRI) architectural models together with their respective drawings provide specialists with some insight into an architect's mind. It is the conservator's job to assure not just physical integrity but also legibility for the items to be interpreted correctly.

As part of the John Lautner Archive, the model for the Turner House, which was built in the early 1980s in Aspen, Colorado, was recently donated to the Department of Architecture and Contemporary Art at the GRI. The overall yellowed appearance of the grainy surface of this model could easily be misread. An apparent interpretation was that of a modernist mansion after a sandstorm - a fantasy not far fetched, as Lautner had numerous wealthy clients in and around the desert city of Palm Springs, California.

The challenge of this intervention was to provide visitors of a traveling Lautner exhibition with a better chance of correct interpretation while keeping reversibility in mind.

Usual conservation issues of lost of elements, structural integrity and accumulated surface grime will only briefly be mentioned, as this presentation will focus on the search for and application of "faux snow", resembling the actual Colorado setting.